Screening Adolescents for Sensitive Health Topics in Primary Care: A Scoping Review

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We sought to aggregate common barriers and facilitators to screening adolescents for sensitive health topics (e.g., depression, chlamydia) in primary care, as well as those that are unique to a given health topic. We conducted a literature search of three databases (PsycInfo, MEDLINE, and CINAHL) and reference lists of included articles. Studies focused on barriers and facilitators to screening adolescents (ages 12-17 years) for sensitive health topics in primary care that are recommended by national guidelines. Articles were peer-reviewed, presented empirical data, and were published in English in 2006-2021. We coded barriers and facilitators using the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research, a well-established framework within implementation science. In total, 39 studies met inclusion criteria and spanned several health topics: depression, suicide, substance use, HIV, and chlamydia. We found common barriers and facilitators to screening across health topics, with most relating to characteristics of the primary care clinics (e.g., time constraints). Other factors relevant to screening implementation ranged from confidentiality concerns to clinician knowledge. Barriers and facilitators specific to certain health topics, such as the availability of on-site laboratories for HIV screening, were also noted. Findings can guide refinements to screening implementation.

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